

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 LONDON 01835 01 OF 02 021745Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEA-10 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 INR-07
HA-05 L-03 IO-13 /069 W
-----010205 021804Z /50
P R 021715Z FEB 78
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2716
INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 01835

STADIS////////////////////////////////////

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PINT, SA, UK, SHUM
SUBJECT: BRITISH PRESS ARTICLE CAUSES STRONG SAUDI
REACTION

REF: JIDDA 719

1. DISCUSSION OF EXECUTION HAS BEEN FEATURED IN BRITISH
PRESS SINCE ARTICLE ON FRONT PAGE OF OBSERVER OF JANUARY
22. ON FEBRUARY 1 IVOR LUCAS, HEAD OF FCO MIDDLE EAST
DEPT, REVIEWED ISSUE FROM BRITISH PERSPECTIVE FOR EM-
BOFF AS FOLLOWS:

2. BRITISH EMBASSY IN JIDDA HAD BEEN REPORTING ON THE
CASE SINCE LAST JULY, BUT IT DID NOT BECOME PUBLIC
UNTIL PUBLICATION OF THE INACCURATE STORY IN THE
OBSERVER BY AN UNNAMED "SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT."
LUCAS, AN INTELLECTUAL ORIENTALIST AND A THOUGHTFUL
STUDENT OF ISLAM, SAID IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT FROM A
HUMAN RIGHTS POINT OF VIEW, WHATEVER HAD HAPPENED
WAS "HORRENDOUS." BRITISH PUBLIC OPINION WAS AROUSED
AND A STREAM OF LETTERS CRITICAL OF THE SAUDI REGIME
STARTED FLOWING INTO THE TIMES.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 LONDON 01835 01 OF 02 021745Z

3. ON JANUARY 26 LUCAS WAS INFORMED ON VERY SHORT
NOTICE THAT THE FCO PRESS SPOKESMAN COULD EXPECT A
QUESTION ON THE CASE. SINCE IT INVOLVED HUMAN RIGHTS,
LUCAS DID NOT FEEL THAT A "NO COMMENT" REPLY WOULD BE
APPROPRIATE, AND THEREFORE QUICKLY DRAFTED THE FOLLOW-
ING REPLY: QUOTE WE SHARE THE REGRET WHICH HAS AL-

READY BEEN WIDELY EXPRESSED THAT SUCH A TRAGEDY SHOULD HAVE OCCURRED. BUT, AS THE ORIGINAL BRITISH PRESS REPORT POINTED OUT, THE EPISODE IS EXCEPTIONAL. END QUOTE. THE STATEMENT THUS AVOIDED DIRECT CRITICISM OF THE SAUDI REGIME.

4. THE BBC PROMPTLY REPORTED THE STATEMENT, WHEREUPON THE SAUDI AMBASSADOR, STATING HE WAS ACTING ON THE PERSONAL INSTRUCTIONS OF FOREIGN MINISTER PRINCE SAUD, PROTESTED TO THE FCO THAT IT WAS A GRATUITOUS COMMENT ON AN INTERNAL SAUDI MATTER. IN RESPONSE, FOREIGN SECRETARY OWEN ON JANUARY 27 SENT A MESSAGE TO JIDDA AND INSTRUCTED AMBASSADOR WILTON TO DELIVER IT PERSONALLY. LUCAS SAID THAT THE OWEN MESSAGE CONCENTRATED ON EXPRESSING REGRET THAT THE BROADCAST HAD CAUSED OFFENSE, AND INCLUDED THE STATEMENT, "THE LAST THING I WANT TO DO IS TO ADD TO THE DISTRESS WHICH THE RECENT TRAGIC EVENTS MUST HAVE CAUSED TO THE ROYAL FAMILY." OWEN THUS AVOIDED SAYING THAT HE REGRETTED THAT THE FCO HAD MADE A STATEMENT, AND AVOIDED RETRACTING THE STATEMENT.

5. THE SAUDI EMBASSY THEREUPON ON JANUARY 31 PUT OUT A PUBLIC STATEMENT WHICH, NOTING THAT THE COUPLE HAD BEEN EXECUTED FOR ADULTERY IN COMPLIANCE WITH KORANIC LAW, SAID OR IMPLIED THAT THE SAUDIS HAD RECEIVED AN CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 LONDON 01835 01 OF 02 021745Z

OFFICIAL APOLOGY FROM OWEN, WHICH WAS NOT RPT NOT THE CASE. THIS NEWS PROMPTLY PRODUCED A FURIOUS REACTION FROM LEFT-WING LABOR MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT, WHO TABLED A COMMONS MOTION DENOUNCING WHAT THEY ASSUMED TO BE OWEN'S APOLOGY. ACCORDING TO THE PRESS, JO RICHARDSON CALLED THE APOLOGY "INCOMPREHENSIBLE AND TOTALLY INCOMPATIBLE" WITH THE FOREIGN SECRETARY'S DECLARED DEFENSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS, AND MARTIN FLANNERY CALLED IT "GROVELLING, HUMILIATING, AND SHAMEFUL."

6. DR. OWEN HAS SO FAR NOT MET THIS ATTACK IN PARLIAMENT, BUT IN A SPEECH TO THE ZIONIST FEDERATION THE EVENING OF FEBRUARY 1 HE IS QUOTED AS HAVING REFERRED GENERALLY TO THE INCIDENT BY SAYING "ON HUMAN RIGHTS THE PRICE ONE PAYS IS A LITTLE INCONSISTENCY...WE DEAL WITH COUNTRIES OF DIFFERENT TRADITIONS, DIFFERENT LEGAL AND SOCIAL SYSTEMS...WHAT IS CONSIDERED ACCEPTABLE IN ONE IS UNACCEPTABLE IN ANOTHER. SOMETIMES WHAT GOVERNMENTS HAVE TO SAY MAY AFFECT...OUR OWN PROSPERITY

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 LONDON 01835 02 OF 02 021739Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEA-10 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 INR-07
HA-05 L-03 IO-13 /069 W
-----010098 021805Z /50

P R 021715Z FEB 78
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2717
INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 LONDON 01835

STADIS////////////////////////////////

AND EMPLOYMENT PROSPECTS AT HOME. THOUGH THIS DOES NOT
MEAN WE HAVE TO KEEP SILENT, IT MEANS WE WILL HAVE TO
BE SENSIBLE AND NOT PROVOKE UNNECESSARY DAMAGE. IT IS
OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO EXPLAIN THE GOVERNMENT'S POINT OF
VIEW, BUT I BELIEVE WE CAN BEST DO SO BY STICKING FIRM-
LY TO THE UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES OF OUR POLICIES, RATHER
THAN BY CONCENTRATING ON INDIVIDUAL CASES."

7. OWEN MAY HAVE TO FURTHER EXPLAIN THE CASE IN
PARLIAMENT. IN A BRIEF CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF, FCO
ASSISTANT SECRETARY WEIR CHARACTERIZED THE DISPUTE AS
"A LUDICROUS IMBROGLIO IN WHICH WE SHOULD NEVER HAVE
BECOME INVOLVED."

8. TEXT OF OBSERVER ARTICLE POUCHED TO JIDDA AS
REQUESTED. WE ASSUME 77 JIDDA A-109 HAS BEEN POUCHED
TO LONDON.

9. EMBASSY COMMENT: NOT FOR THE FIRST TIME THE FCO,
HAS BEEN CAUGHT BETWEEN ITS POSITION IN THE VANGUARD OF
THE INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS MOVEMENT AND ITS
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 LONDON 01835 02 OF 02 021739Z

ECONOMIC INTERESTS IN ONE OF ITS BEST AND RICHEST
MIDDLE EASTERN CUSTOMERS.

BREWSTER

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, HUMAN RIGHTS, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS, ALLEGATIONS, ATROCITIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 02 feb 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978LONDON01835
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780050-0454
Format: TEL
From: LONDON
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t197802101/aaaadhtml.tel
Line Count: 174
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 73d1cdcc-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: STADIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: STADIS
Reference: 78 JIDDA 719
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 08 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3431612
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BRITISH PRESS ARTICLE CAUSES STRONG SAUDI REACTION
TAGS: PINT, SHUM, SOPN, SA, UK
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/73d1cdcc-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014